

Study Away Uruguay J-Term Program (Hispanic Studies & PE Credit) January 2020

Tania Reyes ('20, Hispanic Studies/Biology Double Major)

“Studying away to Uruguay in 2020 is an experience I value so much because I was able to first-hand experience a different environment, culture, and language altogether. Being a native Spanish speaker, it was very interesting to slowly witness and compare



the difference in meanings of words and phrases used in Uruguay to the ones back home in Mexico. Who knew the word “piña” could also be called “ananá” in Uruguay? It’s the experience of living life as a student in Uruguay where you can really immerse yourself in unforgettable moments that not only are fun, but benefit your Spanish-speaking skills. Every excursion and field trip that is included in this program, from attending festivals/parades to visiting historical landmarks, sets you up to succeed in this program. I would often find myself revolving my days at the beach (which is at a walking distance from the school!). Whether it was to do homework, go for a run, tan, enjoy the views, or spend time with friends or my host family. The friendliness of the residents in Montevideo makes

the experience even better and encourages you to want to explore new places every day. The professors at the school are more than helpful and provide a great relationship with their students. It makes coming to class something to look forward to everyday because of how much they invest their time into making sure we are growing our skills and understanding.”

In the picture, Tania at a lecture at the Museum of Memory (front row, left) with Cindy (front row, right)

Yailine Barajas (‘20, Biology Major, Hispanic Studies Minor)

“Uruguay gave me the opportunity to make so many lovely and unforgettable memories, as well as build new friendships. I got to learn about a country that is very liberal, and has a beautiful culture. Uruguay has an amazing and beautiful history, and having had the opportunity to visit many of these places was very exciting. One of my favorite things was having an opportunity to enjoy the peoples’ culture, especially that of the Afro-Uruguayan community. I loved, LOVED the candombe and being at the traditional *Llamadas of San Baltazar*. It was definitely interesting having the opportunity to compare my native Mexican culture to that of Uruguay as someone who identifies as being of Hispanic background. Even though I already spoke Spanish, there was still so much to learn!

I definitely had some very funny moments where my known Spanish had very different meanings to the way they were used in Uruguay, and it was such an amazing learning experience for me to learn that not all



Spanish is the same. Montevideo is a beautiful place, it was always a beautiful sunny day and we did not forget to enjoy the playa every day! Every day was a new adventure with friends, we really got to make the most of it. The sense of independence and exploration helped me grow so much as a person and student. Learning how to dance tango was so fun, getting welcomed into your host families’ home and getting to get closer with them was also very heart warming. I loved this experience so much, but I have to admit the time went by very fast, which is why I made sure to make the most out of every day!”

In the picture, Yailine learning how to play candombe, an Afro-Uruguayan Traditional Rhythm

Emily Toycen ('22, Hispanic Studies/Environmental Studies Double Major)

“Spending a month in Montevideo, Uruguay was one of the most challenging and fulfilling months of my life. Living in another country can be confusing and scary, but I was able to learn so much from the experience and step out of my comfort zone in new ways that I never would have been able to do at home. Spending time with locals was one of the best parts of the experience and it truly enriched my time there while also challenging me to practice my Spanish skills. There were many days where I was very



tired from speaking Spanish all day in class and activities, but continuing to practice at home with my host mom was where I saw most of my improvement, an experience that can't be replicated in the classroom. There were also so many cultural experiences

and we saw so many interesting and amazing things that opened my eyes to see the beauty in the country of Uruguay and made the month so much more fun. Spending that time in a Spanish-speaking country in South America made me even more excited for my future study abroad and has helped prepare me to spend a whole semester in Costa Rica.”

In the picture, Emily during our one-day field trip to Colonia.

Cindy Ocotlan-Garcia ('22, Hispanic Studies/Biology Double Major)

“Studying away in Uruguay has been one of the most enriching and unforgettable experiences of my life. As a Latina, I was shocked by the various cultural differences and I learned a lot more than I had ever imagined I would. It opened my perspective on how

different Spanish-speaking countries could actually be and has intrigued me to continue learning about others! I learned a lot in Uruguay, from their vocabulary to their amazing traditions. Living in Uruguay was always an adventure, there was no time to be bored. We were constantly occupied with field trips, events, workshops etc...! And when we had a little free time, we always hit the beach! The weekend field trips definitely were my favorite thing about the trip. We were immersed with amazing views and experiences. I had never seen a sea lion so close in my life or rode a horse for more than 30 minutes! These were, definitely, experiences that are difficult to forget. Let's not also forget about the food! Los chivitos and el pomelo were definitely my favorite and I would get them any chance I had! The academic aspect of the program was also amazing. From the staff



to the material we were introduced to. It was great to be able to learn more about Uruguay in the classroom as it put all the pieces together from the different activities we did outside the classroom. The atmosphere was always so positive and it motivated me to be excited about everything we were learning!”

In the picture, Cindy (center), Savannah P. (left) and Neely H. (right) holding their winning photos for the International House Contest.

January 2019

Todd Dizon ('20, History Major, Hispanic Studies Minor, ASPLU President, ROTC)

“For me, this program truly helped me grow academically and personally. The most helpful aspect of the program was the level of immersion. Staying with a host family challenged me to stay immersed in Spanish at all times. It was both fun and difficult.

The food that my host family provided me will always have a special place in my heart. Furthermore, I realized how much of a privilege it is to not have to worry about communication. Simple things such as going to the grocery store or going to a restaurant made me nervous. However, as time passed, I became more proficient at speaking and understanding. Academically, we attended classes at International House Montevideo. At first, I thought classes were going to be difficult. But, I woke up every morning excited to go to class. The instructors at IH Montevideo are wonderful. They made learning incredibly fun. And, perhaps the most enjoyable part of the program was the accessibility to beautiful places. For example, the closest beach to the institution is a 10-minute walk away! Imagine going to the beach after class almost every day of the week. I am so glad I made the decision to attend this program. I will forever look back upon my time in Uruguay.”

In the picture at Playa Pocitos, Montevideo.



Ellie Dieringer ('22, Hispanic Studies/Global Studies Double Major)

“One thing I loved about this program (in addition to the classes, amazing homestay experience, and Spanish immersion) was the opportunity to see diverse parts of the country! Yes, our “home base” was in the capital city of Montevideo, which has such a rich history and so many places to explore! However, the different weekend study trips offered the chance to experience other areas of the country beyond the capital. Life in the city compared to the country is very different, similar to how different regions of the US have different political, environmental, and social identities. This program really packs a rich, authentic experience into only one



month, and I fell in love with the country and the people.” *In the picture at Feria de Tristán Narvaja.*

January 2018

Jayleen Salas ('20, Hispanic Studies/Global Studies Double Major, Peace Corps Prep Certificate Minor)



“It’s quite unbelievable how deep even only a month abroad in this beautiful country can touch you. Never have I felt such a deep connection to a place as I did while in Uruguay. As we were reminded frequently, the program provides a very unique opportunity to immerse yourself in a foreign culture, and if you take advantage of it correctly, you can truly gain a lot. The J Term program in Uruguay challenges the common conception that all Latin countries are the same, and opens your eyes to the unique history of Uruguay. Aside from the cultural experience, I felt my Spanish bettering even after only 3 days. The country radiates liberty and hospitality. As I navigated around, I encountered the nicest, deepest, and the most genuine and open people.”

In the picture, Jayleen (left) with International House Academic Director, Cristina Ramos, after receiving her Certificate of Completion Program

Susan Schowalter ('20, Biology Major, Hispanic Studies and Peace Corps Prep Certificate Double Minor)

“I don’t think you can really prepare for everything you will learn studying away in a foreign country. I have found that living in Uruguay and immersing myself in the Spanish language and Uruguay culture has allowed me to experience the beauty and struggle of people I would have never had the chance to meet. From a social justice perspective, I was able to learn about the impacts of power and privilege from a whole new angle. For the first time in my life I was nervous walking into a grocery store because I was worried I wouldn’t know how to respond if the clerk asked me a question.

Before I traveled to Uruguay I never truly considered or experienced the privilege of language, and now I have experienced it first-hand. Additionally, the opportunity to live with a host family was one of the best parts of this trip. I was able to be a part of an



Uruguayan family and learn what family looks like there. Traveling to Uruguay, a place with a culture and language different from my own, had the unique ability to change how I see myself and the world in which I exist. “

In the picture, Susan (right) with her host mom Alba.

Hannah Hutchison ('20, Kinesiology Major, Hispanic Studies and Peace Corps Prep Certificate Double Minor)

“I’m grateful to have had the opportunity to study away in Uruguay for J-term 2018. Four hours of Spanish class a day definitely contributed to improving my language skills, but I loved that I was able to learn outside of the classroom as well. From living



with a host family to navigating public transportation and buying food at the grocery store, there were endless opportunities to hear and speak Spanish. One of my favorite things to do during my time in Montevideo was to go for runs on the Rambla, a 22-mile path on the coastline that was just five blocks from my house. I usually went

in the evening when the sun was setting, and could hear bits of conversation in Spanish as I ran by the hundreds of other people that were out enjoying the warm weather, gathering with friends or family, biking, rollerblading, walking, simply going about their daily lives. Through this program, I was able to see and do more in a month than I would have thought was possible, and stepped out of my comfort zone in many ways. “

In the picture, Hannah (left) and Erin (right) outside of the Artisans Market in Montevideo.

Jordan Jasorka ('19, Hispanic Studies Major)

“My time in Uruguay was truly an indescribable experience. It is a funny thing: when you are told that you will study away you start to get excited and anticipate the experience, but it is very difficult to understand how much it can truly change your life and how much you can really learn until you have experienced the cultural immersion. What I loved most about this program was its openness to every level of Spanish speaker. Although you will spend your entire time hearing and speaking Spanish, there is room for growth for a student at any level, whether you barely know Spanish or you



are nearly fluent. The people of Uruguay and the faculty at the school were very instrumental in helping my growth in Spanish speaking, comprehension, and in my knowledge of South American cultures. The professors challenged me in ways that I have never been challenged before and the added immersion experience improved my abilities tremendously. I was able to practice the language on a daily basis in class, with my peers, and with Uruguayans. Every person I met in Uruguay was inclusive and

curious. I am so thankful to have had this opportunity to take a step outside of my comfort zone into a cultural experience that has had a profound impact on my life.”

Jordan (right) and Alex J. (right) attending a Carnival parade in Montevideo.

Biankha Pablo ('19, Hispanic Studies Major, Chemistry Minor)

“At first, the idea of studying away scared me because I’d be fully immersed into a completely different culture and a different language. I was also nervous because

speaking is something I try to avoid, let alone in another language. But going to Uruguay J-term 2018, for me, helped me grow in several ways. It was hard to adjust to a new environment but my host dads were amazing and made me feel at home; the professors were



wonderful and I could really see their interest in my learning. Though the course was intense and the days long; the content and experience of actually being surrounded by Spanish in every aspect really did help me to improve and allow me to practice my Spanish speaking skills on a daily basis. The trip was a bodacious opportunity for me and I am so glad I took that little step into a giant world of unknown. If I ever have the chance to study away again; I'll definitely take that leap.”

Jordan (left) and Biankha (right) next to a cachila in Colonia

Rebecca Schulz ('21, Nursing Major, Hispanic Studies Minor)

“Studying away in Uruguay was an incredible experience. I learned more in a month than I ever thought possible. I was a freshman at the time and I was very nervous because I was not confident in my language skills. As a nursing student, it was eye opening to be on the other side of a language barrier. The first couple of days, I struggled with finding words and understanding accents. I think it was very humbling to experience this, because I know as a nurse I will encounter language barriers working with different cultures. Although the first few days were difficult language wise, I surprised myself in how quickly I gained confidence and how much I could understand. I never would have believed that in a



matter of days I could become so much more proficient in the Spanish language. Uruguay is such an amazing country and I experienced so much kindness and hospitality while I was there. Another thing I loved about this program was the diversity of experiences. I was able to go to classes, volunteer at a school, visit museums, watch performances, and still get to travel to various parts of the country. By the end of the month, I wasn't ready to return home because the country, the people, and the culture were all so amazing."

In the picture, Rebecca at the farewell party held at International House Montevideo.

January 2014

Kimberly Belleville (Nursing)

"Studying and adventuring in Uruguay during January 2014 was absolutely a top highlight of my PLU education! This cultural immersion was my sole opportunity, amidst the Bachelor of Science in Nursing curriculum, to travel abroad during my undergraduate career; I wouldn't have traded it for anything! Complete immersion in the Spanish language for an intense month was an excellent challenge that could not be replicated in a PLU classroom. Personal highlights included: becoming family with my host mother, weekend adventures to rural cities, small classroom environment taught by a lively local educator, and experiencing everyday Uruguayan life by daily navigating transportation, shopping, and supermarkets. I highly recommend this Jterm study away opportunity to anyone interested in a splendid Spanish immersion."

Christina Maxwell (Nursing)

"My first time traveling outside of the country was when I traveled to Uruguay for J-term in 2014. I can still clearly remember the day that I heard about the program. Without spending much time to think, I applied, because I had a gut feeling that it



would be an experience that I couldn't pass up, regardless of the fact that it felt out of my comfort zone. Nearly three years later, I have traveled to fourteen different countries with family members, other students, and on my

own. I have not only grown academically, but as my own person and member of the world. I truly believe that participating in the J-term program to Uruguay was the catalyst for all of this. As a prospective graduate of the nursing program, I feel immensely grateful that I had the opportunity to travel to Uruguay within the rigorous structure of the program because it allowed me to recognize my desire to incorporate Spanish into my career as a Registered Nurse. All in all, I can't thank this program enough- it truly was a turning point in my life."

Christina (left) and Kimberly (right)--at the Santa Teresa Fort built in the 18th-Century--and in front of its original infirmary.

Tess Sawatski (Major in Nursing, Minor in Hispanic Studies)

"I had my first Spanish-speaking-ONLY family last Friday-Saturday, on the progressive care unit (a step-down from ICU). I walked in and gave it my best shot, and I was actually able to perform almost all my care that weekend without the interpreter, and still making sure that my patient's pain was managed, the family's needs were met, they understood procedures and medications, etc. I know that there is NO WAY that would



have happened without my experience being immersed in the language both in Uruguay with PLU and later in Guatemala on my own. I loved learning about the culture and history of Uruguay, and staying with a host mom right on the

Rio de la Plata, just a block away from the shining gold sand and soccer fields. I adored walking to school each day past the flower stands and bakeries, having the locals say hello every morning even though we had no idea how to make small talk back, and seeing baby hawks and other exotic animals at the market. Those are experiences that I

never would want to miss out on! So yes, I highly recommend that PLU continue the J-Term trip to Uruguay, and that every student who can squeeze onto the plane sign their name up and get the wonderful experiences that I had. It's worth every penny. And it was the only chance I had to study away as a nursing student, so please keep the J-Term option. Muchísimas gracias por todo.”

In the picture, Tess at Cabo Polonio beach during our weekend-long trip.

**Selina Mach (English/Writing Emphasis and Women and Gender Studies
Double Major, Sociology Minor)**

I had the privilege of completing my last four college credits in Uruguay and I could not



imagine a better way to conclude my time at PLU. I knew almost nothing about Uruguay when I signed up for this trip, but was delighted to discover that this tiny country is full of rich history, beautiful landscapes, and kind people. In addition to learning about Uruguay's unique culture, I can safely say that I learned more Spanish in this single month than the several semesters before it combined. Some of my most distinct memories from Uruguay are walking along the sandy shoreline and collecting beach glass, attending a candombe parade, and eating empanadas with my host family on the

balcony of our apartment.

In the picture, Selina (right) and Andy P. (left) at the hostel in Punta del Diablo, Rocha. Behind them, Mackenzie G. (right), Kimberly B. (center) and Jessica L. (left).